

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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LIGHT RAIL EXTENSION TO UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL PART OF \$47 MILLION APPROVED TODAY FOR UTAH

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Funds to extend light rail from Rice-Eccles Stadium to the University of Utah Medical Center were approved today by a key Senate committee when it gave the nod to over \$47 million requested by Sen. Bob Bennett for Utah transportation projects.

Per the request by Bennett, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved \$15 million for ongoing construction of the light rail transit project from the center of Salt Lake City up 400 South to Rice-Eccles Stadium at the University of Utah. It also approved \$6 million to extend that line 1½ miles to the University Medical Center.

“The U of U campus and the medical center make up one of our busiest traffic choke points,” said Bennett, a member of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation. “Expanding TRAX to include three additional stations and 1½ miles of track will go a long way to ease this congestion. With daily ridership over 23,000, significantly higher than the 14,000 originally projected, it’s safe to say the demand is there.”

Bennett also noted that for the 2002 Winter Olympic Games, the Federal Aviation Administration intends to install a temporary radar system to benefit air traffic flow into Salt Lake International Airport. This system will be located at the Provo Municipal Airport. The bill approved today contains language by Bennett which directs the FAA to leave this radar system at the Provo location after the Olympics until a permanent system is available to replace the temporary system. This radar system will also provide a secondary benefit to the Provo Municipal Airport.

In its approval today of the Department of Transportation Appropriations Bill for Fiscal Year 2002, the committee also supported Bennett’s requests for the following Utah transportation-related projects:

- \$10 million for the I-15 reconstruction project.
- \$7 million for Utah’s intermodal transportation centers.
- \$2 million for the Ogden-Provo commuter rail project.

- \$1.7 million for the Central Valley Rail line project to establish a short line from Sigurd/Salina to the Union Pacific main line at Levan, Utah, the primary purpose of which is to haul coal produced at Utah's largest coal mine in Sevier County. It will significantly reduce traffic along SR-89 and improve the efficiency of getting the coal to market. It will also serve local industry and enable further economic development in the Sevier Valley.
- \$5 million for the transportation system for athletes, spectators, media and other officials associated with the Paralympic Games.
- \$500,000 for a new access road to the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge destroyed by floods in early 1980s.
- The Committee included Brigham City Airport as one of 13 municipal airports to receive part of a \$6 million appropriation for a Transponder Landing System.
- The Committee also lists Utah's Ogden-Hinckley Airport as eligible to receive funds for runway, taxi lane and ramp improvements during the FY 2002.

The bill now proceeds to the full Senate for its consideration. The Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle has expressed his intent to pass these bills before the Senate adjourns for the August recess.

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